

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN TEMPLATE

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This template is intended to be used as a guide to help counties incorporate the 2006 federal disaster response criteria as part of local child welfare plans. Minors in the probation system must also be included in the plan. County plans must be amended to include Child Welfare Services (CWS) Disaster Response Plans and be operational by September 28, 2007.

In September 2006, Congress passed the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law (PL) 109-288). PL 109-288 amended Part B of Title IV of the Social Security Act to reauthorize the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program. Among other changes, PL 109-288 established requirements for states on disaster planning in child welfare under Section 6 (a) (16). Accordingly, counties are requested to address the following program areas in developing local disaster readiness plans.

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN TEMPLATE

CWS Disaster Response Criteria A:	Identify, locate, and continue availability of services for children under State care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster.
Essential Function:	1. Identification and location process of children who may be displaced
Process Description:	
Essential Function:	2. Communication process with child care providers
Process Description:	
Essential Function:	3. Identification of evacuation procedures - Event known in advance

Stanislaus County Community Services Agency Child and Family Services Disaster Plan

Authority:

This Disaster Plan is part of the Community Services Agency (CSA) Emergency Operations Plan. The authority for this plan is contained within the Stanislaus County Emergency Operations Plan, as adopted by the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors on December 4, 2001. The County plan was written in compliance with the State of California's Standard Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS), as required by State Law, SB 1841. On September 19, 2006, the Board of Supervisors approved a resolution adopting the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Because NIMS is based on the ICS, and is very similar to SEMS, the County of Stanislaus meets the basic requirements for NIMS compliance.

Additionally, this plan is based on federal disaster response requirements contained in the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 [Public Law (PL) 109-288]. PL 109-288 amended Part B of Title IV of the Social Security Act to reauthorize the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program. Among other changes, PL 109-288 established requirements for states on disaster planning in child welfare, under Section 6(a) (16).

Purpose:

This Disaster Plan is intended to serve as a guide to be used in responding to and recovering from an emergency situation involving child welfare services (Child and Family Services Division) and children in foster care. The Stanislaus County Community Services Agency (CSA) Child and Family Services Division will be responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of the children under its care, custody and control, as well as other children

identified as "unaccompanied minors" who may be without parents, guardians or responsible relatives during the disaster and/or as a result of it.

Definition of Emergency:

Situation or conditions having a high probability of disabling or immediately life-threatening consequences, such as natural disasters (Floods, Hurricanes, Tornados, Earthquakes), man-made incidents (Terrorist Attacks, War, Bomb Threat), and medical incidents (Outbreak of infectious diseases/Epidemic Outbreaks).

Who may activate the plan?

This plan may only be activated by direct consent of the Stanislaus County Community Services Agency Director or his designee.

Policy

A. Identify, locate and continue availability of Services for children under CSA care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster:

1. Identification and location process of children who may be displaced
 - a. Identify area of disaster by zip code and determine which foster children reside in the zip code. If possible, during normal working hours, all Child and Family Services Division personnel with an assigned caseload will contact the children on their assigned caseloads via telephone and/or personal home visits utilizing CWS/CMS or the physical case file. If the assigned Child and Family Services Division staff person is not available, another assigned Child and Family Services Division staff person shall make the contacts. Caseload coverage shall be ensured by each Child and Family Services Division Supervisor, Program Manager or Assistant Director, in said order.

- a. In times of natural disasters and emergencies, the American Red Cross (ARC) has the responsibility for meeting urgent and emergency needs of victims for food, clothing and shelter in congregate care or other facilities; disaster welfare inquiry, emergency first aid and other basic elements for human comfort and survival. The ARC has agreements with over 60 potential shelter sites within Stanislaus County.
- b. The County will provide needed staff, as available, and to the extent permitted by State law, to assist ARC in disaster and emergency operations. Staff salary and benefits will be provided by the County in both preparedness training and operational assignments.
- c. Where disaster relief services (county Office of Emergency Services and Red Cross) have been established, our agency will compare lists when searching for children and their families.
- d. Child and Family Services Division staff shall be assigned to a designated shelter and/or command post to process the initial intake and registration of unaccompanied minors, as well as make efforts to reunify said children with their parents, legal guardian or responsible relatives in accordance with regulations and legislation governing child welfare practice, if needed.
- e. Child and Family Services Division staff located at the shelters shall accept Suspected Child Abuse Reports (SCARs) and respond in accordance with legislation, regulations and Agency policies dictating child welfare practice. Child and Family Services Division staff shall provide pre-placement preventative services and/or foster care placement services, as needed, and as regulated by current legislation, regulations and Agency policies guiding child welfare practice.

4. Parental notification procedure

As soon as possible after ensuring the safety of all children in foster care, Child and Family Services Division personnel make due diligent attempts to notify parents and/or legal guardians of the safety of his/her child, unless parental rights have been terminated.

5. Alternative processes for providing continued services

- a. In the event of a disaster, all staff who are in a safe area, are to contact their regularly assigned Program Manager for emergency assignments. Those who have cell phones, pagers, or radios, are to turn them on and keep them available for use as needed. Active efforts to follow all Court Orders made prior to the disaster will be made.
- b. Child and Family Services Division staff shall ensure ongoing case management duties are fulfilled on behalf of all dependent children and their families as applicable to current legislation, regulations and Agency policies guiding child welfare practice.

6. Staff assignment process

- a. On the basis of an assessment, the Program Manager, in conjunction with the Assistant Director, will delineate the staff needed to address the unique needs presented by the emergency.
- b. In the event of a life threatening situation, the Child and Family Services Division staff will require the approval of a program manager and/or Assistant Director to act in opposition to an existing Court Order and a Court Report will be filed as soon as possible explaining why the applicable Court Order could not be followed.
- c. Unless otherwise directed, all CSA personnel are required to work their regularly scheduled work calendar and hours.

7. Workload planning

- a. In the event personnel are unable to contact their regularly assigned Program Manager, they shall immediately contact or proceed to an American Red Cross shelter or emergency command post in Stanislaus County to check in for assignment.

- b. After ensuring the safety of their own families, personnel shall immediately report to their designated station and conduct their assigned duties and responsibilities, as long as it is safe.
- c. Active efforts to follow all Court Orders made prior to the disaster will be made.

8. Alternative locations for operations

In the event our central office is damaged or otherwise unavailable to be used in an emergency, The Community Services Agency Business Continuity Plans call for us to:

- a. Limit business activity to that accorded by magnitude of disaster, i.e., health & safety issues only.
- b. Station available staff according to location of emergency command centers or shelters established by Office of Emergency Services or American Red Cross.
- c. Use our Turlock/Families in Partnership office and other outstations to the extent possible. Work multiple shifts at these locations, to the extent possible.

9. Orientation and ongoing training

Supervisors will review with staff the Child and Family Services Division disaster plan periodically. One way to do this will be by conducting tabletop exercises or having staff attend disaster preparations related trainings. Orientation on disaster plan will also be included in our foster PRIDE training. The "Coffee Connection" and FFA quarterly meetings will incorporate education on Disaster Planning and discuss the various approaches each foster home has in place to respond to a disaster.

B. Respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those case

1. New Child Welfare Investigation and Implementation for providing new Services

- a. Emergency Response services to the public shall continue during and after a disaster. Child abuse and neglect investigations shall be conducted in accordance with regulations, legislation and Agency policies and procedures active in affect prior to the disaster Child and Family Services Division personnel shall, after a child has been placed into custody, locate foster care placements on behalf of those children.
- b. Child and Family Services Division personnel shall continue searching for placement on behalf of detained children until safe, suitable and approved/licensed placements are found and made. During the placement search, Child and Family Services Division personnel shall be assigned to rotating shifts for the care and supervision of detained children. The care and supervision site may be in a designated shelter or other facility that is safe and has food, water and proper sanitation for the children.
- c. Welfare and Institutions Code Petitions and Reports must be prepared and filed within statutory guidelines during and after a disaster in the event the Court system is functioning. The Agency is still held to statutory requirements for the detention of children if Court days are being counted in the County. All other legal and civil rights accorded to children and their families will also continue to apply during or after a disaster; therefore, Child and Family Services Division personnel will make active efforts to comply with those regulations.
- d. Child and Family Services Division personnel shall assist "unaccompanied minors" resulting from the disaster. These children may be delivered to Child and Family Services Division personnel, sent to emergency shelters and/or must be responded to by Child and Family Services Division personnel in other areas of the County. Child and Family Services Division personnel shall make every effort to locate the children's parents, legal guardians and/or responsible relatives to release the children to during or after the disaster in accordance with the Welfare and Institutions Code and Agency policies and procedures.

- e. If children can be released safely, all efforts, services and contacts shall be entered into CWS/CMS as a referral and closed appropriately. While maintaining confidentiality, hand written notes, documents and forms shall be completed if CWS/CMS is not available and the information shall be entered as soon as possible when CWS/CMS becomes available.
- f. If children cannot be safely released or no one fitting the required caretaker description in Welfare and Institution Code can be located on behalf of the child, Child and Family Services Division personnel shall treat the referral as a detention pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code Section 300(g) (abandonment, caretaker absence).

C. Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of disaster

1. Communication structure-child welfare personnel (phone tree)

On the basis of an assessment, the program manager, in conjunction with Assistant Director, will delineate the staff needed to address the unique needs presented by the emergency. Working with the Assistant Director, the program managers will develop a phone tree.

2. Communication process when all normal channels are unavailable

If Child and Family Services Division staff is unable to contact a supervisor or program manager, staff is to listen to emergency channel to receive information on disaster response. The emergency channel will provide information regarding the extent of disaster and the location, safety permitting, where child welfare services will continue to be provided. If no information regarding Child and Family Services Division is provided on emergency channel, Child and Family Services Division staff will call the CPS hotline.

D. Preserve essential program records

The Stanislaus County Community Services Agency Child and Family Services Division operates under a statewide Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). This system is off site and is backed up daily by IBM. Managers and supervisors also have access to a computer program called C-IV. C-IV can provide lists of all children in out of home care. A weekly updated roster (hardcopy) of all children in care is in the administrative binder. The administrative binder is carried by the on call manager who is available 24 hours a day. The roster includes the case number, SSN, DOB, name, and address, where all the children in CWS are placed. A copy of this roster is kept with the on call manager, the Assistant Director and in the Child Protective Services Intake office.

E. Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children reporting process

When a disaster is local, Stanislaus County Child and Family Services will contact the sending state's assigned Child Welfare Social Worker to inform them of the disaster or emergency and communicate our plans to keep the child safe. In the event that the sending state's assigned Social Worker cannot be reached, Stanislaus County Child and Family Services ICPC liaison will contact the receiving state's ICPC administrator or designee. The response time to inform the sending state of the child's status will depend on the ability to telephone, send a fax, or e-mail the sending state.

When the disaster occurs in a receiving state that houses a child from Stanislaus County, the Stanislaus County case carrying social worker will contact the receiving state agency by telephone, fax or email. If the receiving state's lines are down, the Stanislaus County Child and Family Services ICPC liaison will contact the receiving state's ICPC administrator or designee. The Stanislaus County case carrying social worker will also contact the Red Cross and any emergency shelters set up in the receiving state. The case carrying Social Worker will document efforts made, the emergency plan

in effect, and any other pertinent information received from the receiving state in the contact section of CWS/CMS.

F. County and State Partnerships

- a. The County will coordinate the capability of all Stanislaus County departments to respond to disasters and emergencies of all types as outlined in local ordinance, the State Emergency Services Act, the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and Public Laws 93-288 and 100-707.
- b. Stanislaus County Community Services Agency will coordinate disaster services with the local county Office of Emergency Services and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to ensure appropriate response in the event of a disaster. An agency representative from CSA will be identified and serve as the primary contact with the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Liaison Officer and CDSS. All coordination with the EOC liaison officer, the allocation of CSA staffing resources, and incident planning should be channeled through this person.
- c. Child and Family Services Division staff will respond to emergencies with other emergency personnel as requested and as applicable to their roles and duties (i.e. Law Enforcement, Fire, Public Health, Mental Health, Probation).
- d. In the event that other counties request assistance on behalf of their dependents, Child and Family Services Division personnel shall honor those request only if Stanislaus County's dependents have been take care of first. Assistance to other counties affected by a disaster will be coordinated with the local Office of Emergency Services.

G. Stanislaus County Probation Plan

1. The probation department will routinely prepare a list all of children in group homes and foster care with names of group homes, addresses, phone numbers and two or more contact personnel. The list will also

contain information about special medical or mental health needs of the children in placement and the names, addresses and phone numbers of parents and or guardians.

2. The lists will be e-mailed and printed out by all facility and probation managers and the information will be kept at the three offices. The three offices include the Juvenile Institutions, Adult Field Services, and Juvenile Field Services. In addition, the placement supervisor, the division manager and back up placement officer will retain a copy of the information with them at all times. The officers are responsible for keeping the information in a secure location for confidentiality purposes. Obsolete copies will be periodically mechanically shredded.
3. The placement officer will also develop a list of all potential group homes and foster homes for emergency placement housing purposes. The list will be emailed to all three offices and printed out and secured in a location accessible to staff. In addition, the placement officer and back placement officers will retain a copy of the information with them at all times.
4. All lists will be updated once per month or when change in information occurs. The placement officer will be responsible for all updates and dissemination of information to the five office locations via e-mail.
5. In the event of a disaster, the placement officer or other designated staff will contact each group/foster home provider by telephone to determine the safety and security status of each child or children in their care. If the probation department is satisfied that the safety and security of the child is not in jeopardy, the child/children will remain with the provider.
6. The probation officer will prepare a list of all children needing to be retrieved and their locations.
7. Those children who are 90 days or less from completion of placement may be returned to their parent if possible.

8. The probation department will dispatch all available staff, including supervisors, probation officers and facility officers to the locations where children must be retrieved and relocated. The field services chief deputy, juvenile division manager, and supervisors will be primarily responsible for contacting probation personnel and coordinating this operation.
9. The placement officer will be responsible for contacting parents and advising of the circumstances and the status of their child, etc.
10. Children who cannot be returned to their parent or guardian will be temporarily housed in within the juvenile detention facility. Probation staff will provide around the clock supervision.
11. Food and medical supplies will be provided by facility staff and treatment will be provided by contracted medical personnel.
12. The probation department will secure a Standing Order from the Juvenile Court to allow for the temporary housing of placement children in the County juvenile detention facility for the purpose of securing their safety until suitable and safe housing can be established.
13. The probation department will utilize the probation department's phone tree list and protocol to contact all necessary staff to implement this operation in the event of a disaster and the need to locate group home/foster care probation wards.